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**Review of: Religions and Education in Antiquity, Alex Damm. Studies in Honor of Michel Desjardins. Numen Book Series, 160 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019)**

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## Rezensionen

**Alex Damm, ed.:** *Religions and Education in Antiquity. Studies in Honor of Michel Desjardins*. Numen Book Series 160 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019), 243pp (Indices pp 225–243).

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This volume offers nine essays and a substantial introduction in honor of the Canadian professor Michel Desjardins, an expert in Gnosticism and (contemporary) pedagogy. I will first summarize the articles in the volume, before turning to the introduction.

John L. McLaughlin's article reviews the pedagogical competences of the Book of Proverbs as a composition in its own right and not, as usually done, as simply an arranged collection of, well, proverbs. Wayne O. McCready approaches texts from the Qumran community with theses of (sacro-)space and 'place'. Accordingly, the community could be described as a product of friendship (1QS 1:7b–9a), built on mutually creative and dynamic plurality, and constantly under construction (both 1QS 6:13b–16a). Jack N. Lightstone focuses on geographically defined space to describe "a late Second Temple Judaism in Jerusalem" (81). He proposes to see it as a "religious cultural system" founded on subsystems such as "the differentiation of people in distinctive castes; the rules of purity; the system of agricultural gifts; the system of sacrifices, festival days and pilgrimage; a taxonomy of geographical space" (89). Joseph A. Novak surveys the different usages of the term *techne* in Plato and the New Testament. While Plato's *techne* is a set of rules that help to acquire knowledge, the NT uses the term exclusively to designate manual crafts. Apparently, then, in NT perspective "the revelation of Christ" is enough to create a "state of 'moral' excellence or justice in believers" (124). Alex Damm explores the concluding remarks of the 'Word against Babylon' in Rev. 18: 22–23a in its potential as rhetorical peroration (*epilogos*), shaped against the LXX's Jer 25:10 and Ezek 26:13. Mona Tokarek Lafosse provides an overview and discussion of the sixteen (!) occurrences of the term διδάσκω (and cognates) in the first letter to Timothy (1. Timothy). She then turns to the learners, whom she defines as those who listened to the (fictive) letter's public declamation. Correct teaching, the letter's main concern, is important, she argues, because it is "part of the public worship and community life" and its manifestation in the lives of the members (166). William Arnal's contribution contrasts this observation nicely

with an assessment of the Gospel of Thomas' concentration on *individual* study and the kingdom *within*. The teacher's function in the gnostic text is reduced to the simple transmission of text, leaving the work of interpretation to the student, whom Arnal defines as the text's reader. John Horman's contribution is an erudite compilation of differences between the Greek texts of the Gospel of Thomas and its Coptic translation. Finally, Michael Kaler discusses praise and rebuke in teacher-student dialogues as not concerning "salvific knowledge, but right conduct" (214). Reading Kaler's and Arnal's contributions together seemingly implies that gnostic texts make use of teacher-student settings and disciplinary language because they do not rely, as do many other texts, on "high profile ancestral texts" (Arnal, 203), but attempt to convey a new and previously unheard-of message.

Scholars of ancient and late antique adult instruction find interesting conversation partners in this stimulating volume. My only quibble with this book is the discrepancy between the title, Damm's introduction, and the content of the papers. In defining religion and education in their broadest possible senses, Alex Damm tries to create a thematic umbrella for the diverse range of papers in his introduction. Yet, only two papers make use of the term religion (McCready; Lightstone), and only in Lightstone's and Damm's papers does doctrine play a role. Rather, the more generic questions asked by the other papers make them particularly valuable for comparative analysis outside of the framework 'religions' and their associated texts. The box 'education' might also prove more useful if narrowed down instead of opened up. With the exception of the Book of Proverbs (McLaughlin), none of the papers, for instance, addresses literacy or subsequent basic education. Rather, the texts under discussion clearly aim at affecting change in the adult and, hence, already set mind by pulling strings, which may still cause a form of *metanoia*. The strength of the present volume is then the display of the variety in which authors tried to instigate adult learning or self-improvement: by means of engaging content such as riddles (McLaughlin); by creating a stimulating space (McCready); via persuading rhetoric (Damm), public community life (Tokarek Lafosse), individual teaching (Arnal), select translation of texts (Horman), or by evoking the disciplinary language of the teacher (Kaler).